

/jour/mar19.96

0945 Tuesday (up till 2:30 with films from Vas; after dinner with Vas, Vivian Ronay (photographer, Bosnia); Paul Roth (photographer, curator at Corcoran; exhibit on hospices; certainly more intelligent, wiser, than Harrington; conceivably not smarter, though probably so. 29; student of philosophy at Chicago and...); George Ovitt (teacher at Sidwell Friends; taught course on Bhagavad Gita; however, apologist for Krishna; not very perceptive; dumb, traditional comments...) (BG presents the traditional Hindu/Vedanta (Vas points out: Aryan, invader) values/rationale for sustaining the structure of society, caste system ("created" by Krishna). "Not a rationale for slaughter" per se, or for "simply following orders, keeping your mouth shut" (except to the extent that this is your given caste role in society, for ksatriya) (He seemed to have gotten from Vas, as had Harrington, that this is what I had said, which I hadn't; Vas got this from my analogy to Calley and Medina).

But he ignored that a quite different point of view--more original, humanly, and I would say more ethically compelling and valuable--was available at that time, in that culture, but it is expressed in the same poem by Arjuna. And it corresponded to the ethical implications of Buddhism, which were expressed two centuries or more earlier. (He mistakenly thought that Buddha came later. And he regarded the BG as a chapter in, part of, the Mahabharata, though according to the Isherwood edition it was written independently, by a separate person. He wanted to defend the Mab, more than the BG--which does address directly the issue of behavior in and toward warfare, specifically the killing of relatives.

Arjuna - and contemporary hearer - had a choice of views. In fact, B.G. is worth reading & reading for his answer!

He wanted to interpret Krishna's position as reflecting the judgment that Arjuna's cause was just, that his faction had the more just position. But Krishna does not emphasize this, if he expresses it at all. Virtually everything he says could be addressed equally well to any of the warriors on the other side (as is usually the case with Just Cause arguments: both sides regard their cause as just, and usually have some basis, comparably sound or unsound to an objective observer).

If the BG is not Eichman's Bible (insofar as it does not rationalise the slaughter of non-combatants, terrorism) it is, perhaps, Rommel's or Guderian's Bible. Don't worry about the cause, or the indirect, undesired effects of your actions: just do your job, to the best of your ability, the better the better. So long as you have a right attitude: you're not concerned with the fruits, rewards (especially for yourself), the prospects, the effects: only with doing your (caste) duty.

Is this an adequate or appropriate ethic? Especially in the age of mass conscription, weapons of mass destruction,

indiscriminate weapons, weapons of omnicide? Or should we look again at the neglected alternatives: Jain, Buddha, Jesus, Gandhi: Arjuna's initial position! (That he was argued out of this, not so much by persuasive logic, but by a manifestation of power and awful magnificence that perhaps no other human had ever seen (like a nuclear explosion, Trinity! which was the precise analogy Oppenheimer saw, with the same effect--except that he was the "father" of that manifestation!) is humanly understandable, forgiveable...He didn't just give way to arguments of careerism, which Krishna did offer brazenly, or to thin logic, sophistry. He was understandable awed and humbled by Krishna's self-revelation (not exactly without egotism on Krishna/Vishnu's part: though a humble God is not a familiar notion. Jesus, yes: but he was distinctly a "Son". And he wasn't always so humble.)

I am a follower of King (as much as of King's teacher, Gandhi; I read more of King, directly, than Gandhi, and earlier, or about the same time. Maybe bondurant first. Also, a follower of Deming; Rosa Parks. (My first, assigned, teacher was a woman, founder of a religion. And then, my Mother).

A lover of group sex? Yes, that I share with King, too. (Nor was he a vegetarian? Nor a total follower of Gandhi in austerity, clothes, spinning...) I don't regard the former as a human ";failing" of King, either; though he was married...
OK: 10:55: see below: above was inserted after previous "ending."

15 minute exercise:

This could be one of the happiest times of my life. The happiest in years. I'm off Zolof; feeling fine, better than before. (So far--off since March 7, 12 days ago; down from 125 on Saturday, March 2--still some feeling of being drugged. Perhaps a reaction to withdrawal, a transition. Unusually forgetful. Some diarrharea (sp?). A little spacey, hands sometimes shakey (not most of the time, not now). Definitely often hyper, as if caffeined: though no caffeine. (Often verbal in an excited way Pat would not like to be around, though sometimes enjoyable to me).

Try keeping fingers moving on keys, as if writing with pen, for this exercise. Not stopping to think. Got up from bed and went right to keys, after putting on bathrobe, and having a sip of orange juice. Can't keep fingers moving quite as if writing, unless I fill this with makework.

Last night fight with Bill Harrington, 22, over Just War. He was incredibly intellectually arrogant--without real basis in intelligence, though he's reasonably smart--apparently reflecting a Yale over-confidence, elitism (just graduated; going to Yale Law School in fall; has been out this year).

Thought this morning on waking: My own personality, limitations, characteristics, get in the way of acceptance of my message. What aspects of my personality?

Intellectual arrogance. Overly verbal. Fascinated, obsessed, with ideas; concepts, distinctions, connections/analogies, hypotheses, inferences. Especially my own: the play of my mind, my ideas. Though by no means exclusively my own ideas. I value highly getting new thoughts, ideas from others. Though even then I am overly fascinated (from the point of view of my relations with others) with the effect of their thoughts, perceptions, ideas, on my own: the relation of their views to mine, the ideas I have that are stimulated by theirs.

I have always been over-quick--~~over~~ interrupting their flow to make the observation, as if they will be flattered and gratified to learn, that they have stimulated a new thought in me, as if that should or might be their highest aspiration, the most valuable and most likely positive result of their own cogitation or expression. They will be thrilled to hear that they have just caused me to have a thought I never had before, one that no one has had before, or perhaps (more humbly) one that may well be familiar to others, or to some others, even to this hearer, but that--I can report, to their presumed gratification--I myself never had before, or never saw so clearly, or saw its significance, *till I heard the thought I have just interrupted.*
15 minutes. Interesting: I did keep the keys going. Try 15 minutes more, then turn to "work."

mainly B.G. Hindi
I got very agitated last night, disturbed, insulting (reciprocally, it seemed) to Harrington. For the first time in my 65 (nearly) years, I felt the stereotyped reaction of old/older/old people (men) to certain young people: Arrogant kid, whippersnapper, wet behind the ears, "he's very young."

I said (provoking him), when he said it was hard to make a certain distinction (basically, between combatants and non-combatants, the basis of Just War constraints against terrorism), "How hard have you tried?" and/or, perhaps you haven't tried hard enough; your views will change--toward mine--when you try harder. (didn't say these: implied) ..

I said, apparently, something to the effect: how hard have you thought about this? He answered, anyway: "Probably harder than you."

He later justified this as a verbal parry, a counter-stroke, in badinage, not serious. But actually, I think he meant it. Astonishing gamble. He's sitting across from someone just three times his age, clearly white-haired. How long could he have thought hard about Just War concepts and application? In actual fact, I started about 14, 50 years ago (Hiroshima. Japanese

internment, too, actually. He asked--impressively, what I had thought of Tokyo bombing--which, indeed, no one else at the table had heard of; I told him, nothing, since like other Americans I hadn't heard of it. But if I had...etc.

He couldn't have known just how hard, how centrally, how continuously I had thought of these matters. But it wouldn't have to be any great fraction of my years to have done so longer than he had. "Harder"? That's a difficult comparison to make, across persons. But unless I were pretty dumb, it was unlikely that, on a subject I seemed to be very interested in now, at 64, I hadn't run across, in discussion, reading and thought, most of the thoughts he would come up with at 22, unless he was justified in considering himself a genius, which he isn't.

He thought my remarking on this showed I had a very thin skin. It wasn't that. I was astonished at his chutzpah, his excessive self-confidence. Of course, at 64 I could have been a total beginner on this particular subject, to which he had (clearly) given some thought (though not very original or very interesting thought). But he was betting on that, blind.

Why did I react so strongly? It did make me sad to see him lending his education and his intelligence systematically to trying to undermine proposals to ban terrorism, to regard terrorism as generally, or "always" wrong, or to be skeptical about rationales for killing in war (even of combatants: as in Krishna-Arjuna dialog, the starting point of the discussion).

One sensed someone preparing himself for the Dershowitz role as a lawyer, for defending Claus ^{von}Bulow and OJ Simpson: against "knee-jerk, anti-intellectual, amen corner, unthought-out" criticism or attack. (Dershowitz, in a letter defending his latest book against its reviewer, refers to an interest in whether he, the author and hired lawyer, believed OJ Simpson to be guilty, as a preoccupation with "dirt", (like an interest in Nicole's sex life.)
or Clark/Darden's

It was striking how often he misquoted others at the table, or misinterpreted their positions or propositions in a stupidly inaccurate way, always prejudicially to their views or intelligence. I said to him: "You'll go far." He took this, appropriately, as an insult (which didn't require unusual sensitivity, in context).

10:20. Enough of this. Now, ten last minutes on different subjects, e.g., where I started.

This can be a very happy time. I'm really on my own. I'm free to spend my days exactly as I choose. No one looking over my shoulder. No one to answer to. It's a responsibility. But given that what I "should" be doing is, for a large part, what I want to do, what excites me, what I am enjoying...

Was he projecting and trying to destroy his own 'knee-jerk liberal' which was his 'doublet'?

What is that? Writing stories of my life. Writing them well: not in the form of "good writing" but of good story-telling. Every day in the paper I see columns that are "better written," show more artistry in the expression, that I am exhibiting in my memoir-writing, and even better than I am capable of, at this time in my life, or perhaps ever. But I neither aspire to that "fine writing" (not to be pejorative: really, good, clever or beautiful writing: in the case of Nicholson Baker, supremely clever, or in others, like Marquez, beautiful) nor does it seem to be necessary in my case. Why, indeed, are people reacting so positively to my writing so far, when it is (deliberately) plain, not "artistic"? I don't know, entirely ("gripping, terrific, flowing, I can't wait to read more"). It must be that the story itself, what is being told, is interesting. And that the style doesn't get in the way, it serves and flows, and it doesn't distract.

(I must compare the earlier Janaki and Randy pieces, which both Robert and Scovil describe as less successful, less flowing, although my memory is that they were moving and dramatic, especially the Randy.)

What lies ahead is an Outline, which I am avoiding, postponing, somewhat dreading. I can't foresee an effective tone, an appropriate voice. But then, I didn't for these fragments, either, till I started.

So far my experience is, unless I write in the morning, I don't write at all. Yesterday, I did the old rhythm, and never got to writing. Exercise; breakfast; papers (? that I did on Sunday, and wrote a long file on what I had read, about the Holocaust--see journal--showed to Paine, perhaps should show to Lashmar)); phone calls; errands, shopping; took calls, and initiated a number; made list of things to do, did many of them...

Today, I'm starting right in: though, with an exercise, not memoir...Will I move to memoir now? Probably should do it some before calling Lashmar, breakfast, etc. OK

10:32. 47 minutes. enough.

(actually, end at 10:56:

5 pages in 70 minutes: about 15 minutes a single-spaced page).

Now: at least half an hour on straight memoir. Then call Lashmar...No, it's late, I better just connect with him, then write.

11:35: I commented to Lashmar on my state recently: I "didn't know what impression I may have made on him, monologs, harangueing him, (opinionated, aggressive domineering, argumentative: as with Dratch on LBJ; as if drugged or caffeine, without being either; somewhat pleasurable for me, witty, funny, fast, brilliant; euphoric; but

definitely, not easily controllable for me, and--for Lashmar--not optimal for his own opinion of me, my credibility, my persuasiveness. Euphoria about my successful start at writing, and the pleasure of the process? Feeling of independence, of their opinions of me? And/or a transition state from being drugged on Zoloft, a readjustment? I enjoy it. Other person, less; and effect, not wonderful, though indeed, it hasn't mattered much. I am relatively un-dependent on their feelings toward me. (I am acting like someone who has suddenly become famous, or independently wealthy: no need to care what others think, of me, or of anything. Not a prepossessing way to be. But (one feels): so what?

Well, I do care, or I wouldn't be making these observations, to myself or to others. (I did not admire the way I was last night with Harrington: though apparently I did make a good impression on Roth and Ronay. I don't know about Vas: he is gentle, a mediator; and likes and respects Harrington. If Harrington deserves this, which is probably true, I trust Vas, then he didn't present himself well last night. But then, neither did I.)

New revelations in Post today about tobacco companies monitoring and manipulating the level of nicotine in their cigarettes, treating them as drug-deliverers, and contradicting their sworn testimony. This really is shaping up to have the significance of the Pentagon Papers: on an issue of comparable significance to the prosecution of a medium-sized war (Vietnam) with the potential of being a large-scale war (with China, in North Vietnam). After all, tobacco kills every year as many Americans as died in 3-1/2 years in WWII. Now, new people, high-level directors of research, are telling the truth, following the lead of the "mavericks" and the revealer of the Tobacco Papers (4000 pages). I didn't inspire the same relevant emulation; but then, none of the tobacco whistle-blowers has yet faced criminal charges, or a possible 115 years in prison.